

(Exodus) Exodus 15:23-27

by J. Vernon McGee

God uses bitter experiences to educate and prepare us for something greater, and to help us grow in our faith and obedience.

Duration: 7:24

Scripture: Exodus 15:27, Acts 16:25

Topics: "Expositional"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the experience of the Israelites in the wilderness and how they encountered bitter waters after three days without water. He explains that these bitter experiences are a normal part of the Christian journey and are meant to educate and prepare believers for something greater. The preacher also acknowledges the frustrations, disappointments, and sorrows that Christians may face in life, but encourages them not to let these challenges choke out their faith. He emphasizes that God uses these experiences to brand and shape believers, ultimately leading them to a place of abundant blessing and fruitfulness. The sermon references biblical figures such as Joseph, Moses, Elijah, David, Judson, and John G. to illustrate this point.

Transcript

And verse 23, listen to this, "...and when they came to Myra," and Myra is not only name of a place, it means bitterness, "...they could not drink of the waters of Myra, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Myra. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord.

And the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them, and said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians, for I am the Lord that healeth thee." Now, here is their second experience, it's at Myra, and there were bitter waters when they got there. Just think of it, they've gone three days in the wilderness without water, and they're thirsty, and when they finally come to them, there are bitter waters.

And now you must remember, these are redeemed people, and this place was right on the line of march. God had it marked out for them. You know, the oasis of Myra is a normal Christian experience.

A bitter experience comes to Christians, and it's something that'll puzzle and perplex you. You hear this said today, Why does God let this happen to me? Well, friends, I can't tell you why, but I can say this. He's not punishing you, He's educating you, He's preparing you for something.

In the world, our Lord says you're going to have trouble. It's right on your pathway, there's a Myra, and I think that in the pathway of every believer, there is a Myra, and He arranged it. Someone has said, as you know, disappointments are God's appointments.

I hear this, and these are the things I've come across. A young person says to me, I wanted to go to school. I wanted to prepare for the mission field, but this tragedy, or this came up.

My father died, and I couldn't go to school. I had to help support my mother. And I recall that when I was passed in Nashville, there was there a very beautiful gray-haired, prematurely gray, because she was a young woman, and she was superintendent of the junior department, never complained, sweet.

And I asked somebody one day, I said, what's the explanation of why her hair is gray like that? And this was a way long time ago. They said, you remember World War I, when she was engaged to one of the finest boys here in the church, and he went away to France, and he was killed, and her hair turned gray, because they were to be married. There was that Mara in her life.

Friends, there are the frustrations, and the disappointments, and the sorrows, and your plans can just be torn up like a jigsaw puzzle. And it could be that there's a little grave out on a hillside somewhere. I have one like that.

May I say to you that we all have our Maras, and you won't bypass them. As a Christian, you can't detour them. You can't skip over them, and you can't tunnel under them.

May I say to you, don't let the seed be choked out by the thorns or the cares of the world. Don't let them choke it out. You know, God does use a branding iron.

I remember as a boy in West Texas, in the spring of the year when those calves would come in, they'd brand them, and you'd hear the little old fella, Bella. Oh, you could hear him cry. It did sort of, you know, make you feel sad, but you know who he belonged to after that.

And it was done that he wouldn't get lost, and God does that for us today. You know, what is it that will help the Maras? We're told here there was a tree put in the water, and it made it sweet. And I'm told that concerning my Lord, that cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.

And he died on a tree, and it's that cross that makes the experiences of life sweet. He tasted death for every man, and he took the sting out. Oh, death, where is thy sting? And we sometimes sing, must Jesus bear the cross alone, and all the world go free? No, there's a cross for you, and there is a cross for me.

It's the cross of Christ that will make the bitter experiences of life sweet, my beloved. And then the final verse, and they came to Elam, where were twelve wells of water, and three scorned ten palm trees, and they encamped there by the waters. Believe me, this was a marvelous place, seventy palms and twelve wells of water.

And Elam suggests abundant blessing and fruitfulness. You see, after Mara, God brings his children to Elam. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

And Simon Peter may be locked in the inner prison, but the angel's going to open the door for him. And Paul and Silas may be beaten at midnight, but they're going to sing praises at midnight, and the doors are going to open. There's always Mara along the pilgrim pathway today, but friends, there's also Elam, the place where there's abundance of water, twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees.

And you know, God's plan of usefulness always leads by Mara and by Elam. Joseph, you remember, had that experience. Moses did.

Elijah did. David did. And Judson did.

And John G. Paton did. And Micaiah Formosa did. And I'm sure that you and I are going to have that.

Beyond every Mara, there is an Elam. Beyond every cloud, there's the sun. Beyond every shadow, there's the light.

Beyond every trial, there is a triumph. Beyond every storm, there is a rainbow. George Matheson wrote, I trace the rainbow through the rain.

This is the way God leads us today, friends. All these things happen unto them for examples unto us.

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